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ABSTRACT

This report by the National Institute on Out-of- School Time (NIOST) in association with The Forum for Youth (FYI) investigates how after-school programs in Boston can most effectively promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement. The positive youth development approach addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems. The report explores how, by using this approach, quality after-school programs can incorporate the supports and opportunities necessary for young people to succeed both developmentally and academically. The report outlines key ways quality after-school programs can help to overcome critical barriers to learning and support academic achievement and the well-being of children and youth. The report: (1) provides a review of learning theories; (2) explains the features and rationale of the positive youth development approach; (3) provides local and national examples of programs utilizing positive youth development strategies to support youth development and academic achievement; (4) articulates the particular challenges facing Boston in its efforts to build the capacity of after-school programs to promote positive youth development; and (5) offers both short- and long-term recommendations regarding local actions and policy activities. (Focus groups questions are appended. Contains 84 references and 2 Web resources.) (Author/HTH)

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How Afterschool Programs Can Most Effectively Promote Positive Youth Development as a Support to Academic Achievement:

A Report Commissioned by the Boston After-School for All Partnership

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Abstract

This report by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) in association with The Forum for Youth (FYI) investigates how after-school programs in Boston can most effectively promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement. Quality after-school programs by using the positive youth development approach can incorporate the supports and opportunities necessary for young people to succeed both developmentally and academically. The researchers outline key ways quality after-school programs through the positive youth development approach can help to overcome critical barriers to learning and support academic achievement and the well being of children and youth. This report provides: (1) a review of learning theories; (2) explains the features and rationale of the positive youth development approach; (3) provides local and national examples of programs utilizing positive youth development strategies to support youth development and academic achievement; (4) articulates the particular challenges facing Boston in its efforts to build the capacity of after-school programs to promote positive youth development; and (5) offers both short-term and long-term recommendations regarding local actions and policy activities.

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I. Introduction

The Boston After-School for All Partnership requested that the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) investigate how after-school programs can most effectively promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement. Boston's After-School for All Partnership is a public-private venture to expand, improve, and sustain a system of quality out-of-school time programs for the city's children and youth. Specifically, the Partnership asked NIOST to answer the following questions:

1. What role can quality after-school programs play in meeting the developmental needs of children that are critical preconditions to academic success?
2. What characteristics and features of effective learning environments incorporate the supports and opportunities necessary for young people to succeed both developmentally and academically?
3. How can after-school programs help overcome some of the risk factors to academic learning?
4. What kind of systemic support would be necessary to build the capacity of after-school programs in Boston to promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement?

NIOST's investigation activities included a literature review, three focus groups with after-school program providers and youth development leaders, and multiple personal and phone interviews with program, policy, and organization leaders. NIOST also conducted approximately 15 site visits to after-school programs in Boston. NIOST

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enlisted research and writing assistance from the Forum for Youth Investment. The Forum for Youth Investment (FYI) is a national initiative dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement in the United States by promoting a "big picture" approach to planning and policy development.

This report intends to: (1) provide a review of learning theories; (2) explain the features and rationale of the positive youth development approach; (3) provide local and national examples of programs utilizing positive youth development strategies to support youth development and academic achievement; (4) articulate the particular challenges facing Boston in its efforts to build the capacity of after-school programs to promote positive youth development; and (5) provide both short-term and long-term recommendations regarding local actions and policy activities.

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II. Context

Overview

Recently researchers and educators have begun to broaden their definition of learning and the role positive youth development programs can play in solidifying the developmental needs of children that are critical pre-conditions to general well-being and academic success. Increasingly after-school programs have recognized the value of the positive youth development approach as a primary strategy for supporting the overall development of young people.

There is a wide variety of types of after-school and out-of-school time programs currently in operation in Boston and nationwide. In this report "after-school programs" generally refers to programs that:

- Provide programming from the end of the school day until 5:00 or 6:00 P.M.
- Operate a minimum of three days per week
- Run throughout the school year (from September to June)
- Serve a set group of students who are enrolled in the program (rather than drop-in students)
- Serve school-age youth (K-12th grades)

While this report focuses on programs that meet this definition, it is important to acknowledge that the conceptual, practice, and policy conversations that follow are just

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as relevant to out-of-school opportunities broadly as they are to after-school programs in particular. Moreover, youth development research and practice underscore the importance of thinking about after-school programs in a larger context, emphasizing that young people are developing throughout their waking hours, and throughout at least the first two decades of life. With that important caveat in mind, this report primarily focuses on after-school programs.

Presently, approximately 16,000 youth in Boston are engaged in some type of after-school program organized by schools, local youth organizations, community based organizations, churches, etc. Despite the variety of program models, there appear to be some consistent characteristics and qualities of after-school programs, which warrant investigation and consideration as to their utilization of youth development principles and their impact on academic achievement.

There is significant research which shows that participation in after-school programs is positively associated with better school attendance, more positive attitude towards school work, higher aspirations for college, finer work habits, better interpersonal skills, reduced drop out rates, higher quality homework completion, less time spent in unhealthy behaviors, and improved grades (Clark, 1988; Hamilton & Klein, 1998; Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, and Baker, 2000; McLaughlin, 2000; Posner & Vandell, 1994, 1999; Schinke, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Research has involved and been conducted by national youth organizations, major research institutes, state and local school districts, and higher education institutions.

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Developmental psychologists have challenged the prevailing distinction between social and academic development in children citing that several studies now indicate that social and emotional development are inextricably linked to academic success in youth. (Panel Discussion, After-School Settings Conference, Harvard University, February 2002). This is a critical conclusion at which to have arrived. Because of the relationship between human development and academic development, efforts to enhance and improve opportunities for quality after-school as a support to academic learning are well motivated and correctly focused.

This report is commissioned by The Boston After-School for All Partnership. The first half of this report discusses: (1) the developmental needs of children that are critical preconditions to academic success and how after-school programs can help meet these needs; (2) how after-school programs can help overcome some of the risk factors to academic learning; and (3) the characteristics and features of effective learning environments. The second half of the report examines effective practices in Boston and nationally, and explores the needs of providers, funders, and the field as a whole in trying to reach "best practice." Section four summarizes the inherent challenges to building the capacity of after-school programs and some of the strategies to overcome those challenges. Finally, section five of the report proposes short-term and long-term recommendations for systemic change.

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Theoretical Context for Development and Learning

It is helpful to begin with an understanding of how learning actually occurs. Traditional American human development theory followed the philosophy of John Locke (1927). Locke proposed that the mind at birth is like a tabula rasa or blank slate, devoid of content. More contemporary theories emphasize the child's own role and contributions in the development process. According to Piaget (1932), in order to learn a child must be actively involved with elements in the world and only in this way can those experiences be learned. Learning in a Piagetian sense is a complex interaction between maturation and experience. Psychosocial theorists such as Erickson (1959) suggest a series of developmental tasks or issues that all people face, i.e. developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, etc. Previous developmental outcomes set the stage for current ones.

In his 1983 publication Frames of Mind, Howard Gardner put forth a more pluralistic view of the mind, recognizing many different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles. The seven intelligences include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligence. Gardner states that "while some individuals are "at promise" in an intelligence others are "at risk" and will be likely to have difficulty at tasks involving that intelligence.

Recent insights from brain theorists, neuroscientists, and other researchers have had great implications for education. Researchers have identified complex relationships between brain development, learning context, emotional state, and support the student receives

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(Caine & Caine, 1997; Given, 2000; Levine & Resnick, 1993; Ornstein, 1986). These relationships account for variations in performance and foster a richer understanding of learning differences.

Taken together these theories can be viewed as complementary perspectives that help us understand children's development and make the case for understanding learning as not just one dimensional – but more of a dynamic interaction. And that, in addition to individual biological and psychological needs there are critical social systems also shaping the developing child. Bronfenbrenner (1978) describes such a perspective as the ecology of human development: the mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the immediate setting in which the developing person lives. The youth development field has incorporated this perspective and has sought to understand and describe adolescent development in the context of the critical social systems in which youth grow and learn (Cahill et al., 2002).

Understanding the Positive Youth Development Approach

As defined by the National Collaboration for Youth Members in March 1998, the Youth Development Approach "is a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems." Politz (1996) adds that through "youth development, young people

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attempt to meet their basic personal and social needs and to build competencies necessary for successful adolescent and adult life." Another statement summarizes youth development as follows:

> Youth Development means purposefully seeking to meet youth needs and build youth competencies relevant to enabling them to become successful adults. Rather than seeing young people as problems, this positive development approach views them instead as resources and builds on their strengths and capabilities to develop within their own community. To succeed youth must acquire adequate attitudes, behaviors, and skills. Youth development programs seek to build competencies in the following areas: physical, social, cognitive, vocational, and moral. (Building Resiliency, pp. 11-14, National Assembly, 1994; and Position Statement on Accountability and Evaluation in Youth Development Organizations, p. 1, National Collaboration for Youth, 1996)

Because the youth development approach focuses on fundamental experiences that foster both learning and broader healthy development, this approach is well suited as a strategy for after-school programs (Community Network for Youth Development, 2001). Presuming the ultimate desired outcome is a well-adjusted, academically competent, active citizen -- what are the developmental needs of children that are critical pre-conditions to these achievements? What sets learning in motion and in what kinds of environments can positive youth development flourish?

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Developmental Needs of Children/Preconditions to Academic Success

It is widely understood that one needs skills, knowledge, and a variety of other personal and social assets to function well during adolescence and adulthood (National Research Council, 2002). Much recent attention has been given to the task of distinguishing a "set of personal and social assets that increase the healthy development and well-being of adolescents and facilitate a successful transition from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood" (National Research Council, 2002, p.6). In 2002 the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine jointly produced Community Programs to Promote Youth Development which included a list of 28 personal and social assets grouped into four developmental domains: physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional, and social development. The researchers concluded that individuals have various combinations and ranges of assets; that having more assets is better than having few; and that continued exposure to positive experiences, people, and settings increases the growth and acquisition of assets.

Research from The Search Institute (2000), Child Trends (2000), Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (1991), Community Network for Youth Development (2001), Eccles (1999) and Clark (2002) similarly concludes that in order to succeed and thrive young people need:

- Support through multiple close relationships
- Empowerment

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- Boundaries and expectations
- Constructive use of time
- Commitment to learning, challenging and engaging learning experiences
- Positive values
- Social competencies
- Positive identity
- Physical and emotional safety
- Community involvement
- Meaningful participation, involvement in extracurricular activities
- Participation in religious or spiritual activities
- High expectations for behavior and achievement
- Sense of competence and personal esteem
- Self-awareness, independence, and self-control
- Family connectedness defined as a caring support and a consistent emotional bond

These many characteristics or attributes seem crucial to laying the necessary foundation, which supports youth's positive development. However, there are also risk factors that predict a youth's poor school and developmental outcomes including cognitive deficits, behavior and adjustment problems, and psychological problems (Peth-Pierce, 2000). The presence of the risk factors often limits the child's opportunity to access resources, develop assets, or make connections to supportive adults. Extensive research offers insight into what in children's environment and experiences leave them vulnerable.

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Risk Factors to Learning

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey illuminate the wide range of factors which may impact child welfare including:

- Living in single-parent families
- Living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment
- Living with a household head who is a high school dropout
- Living in low-income working families
- Living in a household without a telephone
- Living in a household without a vehicle
- Have difficulty speaking English

Any of these factors in isolation and too often compounded can hamper children's ability to perform in school and develop the emotional and social competence to transition successfully through adolescence.

Poverty

One of the most salient risk factors to academic and developmental success is poverty. Despite its wealth, the United States has one of the highest child poverty rates among developed nations. The devastating and lasting effect of starting out life poor cannot be underestimated in its association to factors that impede school and personal progress. All of the following factors have been associated with poverty:

- Inadequate nutrition

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- Exposure to environmental toxins
- Diminished interaction due to maternal depression
- Trauma and abuse
- Quality of daily care
- Parental substance abuse

The following information taken from the 2000 U.S. Census data for Boston illuminates many of the challenges Boston faces because it serves large numbers of school-age youth, significant number of families below the poverty level, and a population of diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

Boston Demographic Data (2000 Census)

Total Population	589,141	
Race Profile		
White	54.5%	
Black or African American	25.3%	
American Indian and Alaska Native	.4%	
Asian	7.5%	
Hispanic or Latino	14.4%	
Elementary School Enrollment (Gr. 1-8)	55,372	
High School Enrollment (Gr. 9-12)	29,398	
Number of Families	115,096	
Families below Poverty Level (1999)	17,892	(15%)
Percent of Population 5 years and older speaking language other than English at home	33.4%	

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The period of child development from birth to age five is critical for normal brain development. Recent brain research shows a sensitive period when the brain is most able to respond to and grow from exposure to environmental stimulation (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1997). Exposure to an impoverished environment is a risk factor for developmental dysfunction (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2002). While all children are potentially vulnerable to risk factors that can impede brain development, poor children are disproportionately at risk. Children deprived of proper nutrition during the brain's most formative years score lower on tests of vocabulary, reading comprehension, arithmetic, and general knowledge (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1997).

Violence and Trauma

Children who have witnessed violence in their families, schools, or communities are also vulnerable to debilitating emotional reactions including fear, depression, withdrawal, and anger. Children 6-11 years old who have experienced severe trauma may show extreme withdrawal, disruptive behavior, and /or ability to pay attention (National Institute of Mental Health, 2001). A chronic pattern of psychological maltreatment destroys a child's sense of self and personal safety, which may lead to antisocial behavior, learning impairments, and impaired moral reasoning (Kairys & Johnson, 2002).

Family Disruption

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A review of the literature articulates the centrality of families in contributing to positive outcomes for youth (Cahill et al., 2002). Knowing the important connection drawn between family connectedness and positive outcomes, Bronfenbrenner's (1985) observations about the vulnerability of the family raises a concern about the significant changes that have occurred in families over recent years: increases in maternal employment; increases in single-parent families; increases in geographic mobility; complexity of daily schedules; and the segregation of neighborhoods along multiple characteristics. These changes have impacted the availability of adults, the amount of time dedicated to family activity, and dissolution of the concept of neighborhood. Many youth are at risk because they are without strong supportive family or other adult connections, which is associated with increased involvement in unhealthy and unsafe behaviors.

Teaching Styles and Learning Environment

Factors outside of the neighborhood and the family also put students at risk for academic and personal development difficulty. Bernard (1996) identifies 11 different teaching styles that negatively influence the educational achievement and motivation of students including lack of expectations, authoritarian discipline, dull curriculum, poorly assigned homework, etc. Gardner's (1993) research specifically points to the relevance of learning styles and the consequences of mismatch between curriculum delivery and learning preferences. For many children and youth, language and cultural differences impede learning.

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We are left then with the critical challenge of finding ways to counteract the negative repercussions of poverty, violence, and insufficient support from caring relationships, in addition to supporting learning environments that engage, motivate, and inspire youth towards personal and academic achievement. By promoting positive youth development what role can after-school programs play in helping youth overcome some of these risk factors to academic learning and personal well being?

The Role of After-School

Quality after-school programs by using the positive youth development approach can incorporate the supports and opportunities necessary for young people to succeed both developmentally and academically. Some of the most desirable features of learning environments – such as intrinsic motivation, flexibility, and multiple learning arrangements – are characteristics of quality after-school programs (National Research Council, 2002). In the following key ways quality after-school programs through the positive youth development approach can help to overcome critical barriers to learning and support academic achievement and well being:

- When after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they support the development of a range of non-academic competencies and characteristics that, in turn, support young people's academic learning. For instance, the social and critical thinking skills that young people learn in a project-based, collaborative after-school learning experience help young people succeed during the school day.

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- When after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they ensure that young people have critical developmental inputs that help to ensure academic success, and ensure that young people are fully prepared and fully engaged. For instance, after-school programs put children and youth in frequent and close contact with caring and encouraging adults, an important precondition to learning.

- When after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they create a rich alternative to the learning experiences that students experience in schools. After-school programs provide opportunities for development and enrichment through activities that are often not available during the regular school day and thereby also offer positive alternative choices for time spent outside of school.

- When after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they help to eliminate the consistent barriers to learning faced by young people. For instance, after-school programs can offer a level of engagement and specific supports that may "reach" youth that have otherwise been unreachable because of disruptive behavior, lack of interest, poor sense of self, or repeated failure.

- When after-school programs root their work in a youth development approach, they recognize their programming as part of a larger "developmental space," and

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intentionally link their efforts to other settings in which young people grow and develop. Practically, this means offering connections to counseling, health, and recreation services for youth and families through neighborhood resources, and helping to forge links between school, community, and programs.

Several research organizations or projects have attempted to more comprehensively articulate the features of positive developmental settings. In the following sections we describe what is known through research and evaluation on effective practices and the critical features of effective settings. We point to examples of effective programs and strategies in Boston and nationally, and explore the needs of providers, funders, and the field as a whole in trying to enhance and expand opportunities in Boston.

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III. Effective Practices

The afterschool movement is coming of age in a time when new energy is being brought to the task of defining and creating richer opportunities for learning both inside and outside of school. In recent years, organizations and individuals with roots in research and practice have engaged in efforts to articulate the essential features of environments that support learning and development. Some of these frameworks have emerged from the youth development field; others were developed by researchers and practitioners in the education community. They reflect the field's collective knowledge about what is necessary to support young people's positive development *and* their ability to succeed academically.

Efforts by the Learning First Alliance (2001), Jobs for the Future (Steinberg, 2001), the Forum for Youth Investment (Pittman et al., 2002), researchers Jim Connell and Michelle Gambone (2000), the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research (Thomases & Smith, 2000), Stanford education professor Milbrey McLaughlin (2000), and most recently the National Research Council (2002) have focused on documenting the critical features of effective settings – schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, even families – that support learning and development. While a single set of "best practices" has not been endorsed or adopted in the after-school field (and may not necessarily be appropriate given the diversity of settings and activities taking place during these hours), these lists reflect a growing, consistent research base that can inform after-school practice in important ways.

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What is impressive are the remarkable similarities across the frameworks. With very little artificiality, it is possible to group the elements of the lists into categories (see Key Elements chart). Beyond their general consistency, several themes stand out. The comparison demonstrates a striking consensus, for example, about the importance of challenging, engaging, relevant experiences, and about the need for opportunities to participate and contribute. Engagement and real voice are clearly features of effective program environments. Supportive, significant relationships appreciate nearly the same degree of consensus. At the other end of the spectrum, only two of the frameworks include specific reference to individualized, responsive, and inclusive learning environments. And relatively few single out quality instruction as a separate feature from the other inputs.

Key Elements of Effective Afterschool Programs

- Safe, stable places
- Basic care and services
- Caring relationships
- Relevant, challenging experiences
- Networks and connections
- High expectations and standards
- Opportunities for voice, choice & contribution
- Personalized, high-quality instruction

The bottom line: young people need safe, structured places and links to basic services that if absent, can prevent them from learning and developing. They need high quality instruction. But they also need personal attention; strong, respectful relationships with adults; a culture of peer support, clear rules, high expectations and real assessments; and challenging experiences and opportunities for self-direction, participation and contribution within the organization and the community.

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Inputs for Learning Environments: Consistencies Across Education and Youth Development Research

Learning First Alliance

Core Elements of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments [1]

- A physical plant that promotes safety and community
- School-wide approaches to improving climate, safety, and discipline
- A continuum of supports for the few students who need them
- Orderly and focused classrooms
- Respectful, supportive relationships among and between students, school staff, and parents
- Involvement of Families, Students, School Staff, and the Surrounding Community
- Standards and Measures to Support Continuous Improvement Based on Data
- A challenging and engaging curriculum for all students
- Frequent opportunities for student participation, collaboration, service, and self-direction

Jobs For the Future (JFF)

Essential Supports and Opportunities [2]

- Caring Relationships
- Connections To Expanding Networks and Opportunities
- Culture Of Peer Support For Effort
- Cognitive Challenge
- Community Membership, Voice, and Contributions

Forum for Youth Investment [3]

Services, Supports and Opportunities

- Stable Places
- Basic Care and Services
- High Quality Instruction and Training
- Healthy Relationships With Peers and Adults
- Role Model, Resources, and Networks
- High Expectations And Standards
- Challenging Experiences
- Opportunities To Participate And Contribute

Community Action for Youth Project (CAYP)

Supports and Opportunities[4]

- Physical and Emotional Safety
- Adequate Nutrition, Health, and Shelter
- Multiple Supportive Relationships With Adults and Peers
- Challenging and Engaging Activities and Learning Experiences
- Meaningful Opportunities For Involvement and Membership

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[1] Learning First Alliance. (2000, May, Draft). *Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance

[2] Steinberg, A. (2001). *Coming of Age in 2001: A Position Paper on Effective Learning Environments for 15-24-Year-Olds*. Created in conjunction with the Margins to the Mainstream project. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future

[3] Council of Chief State School Officers and the Forum for Youth Investment. (2001, April). *Students Continually Learning: A Report of Presentations, Student Voices and State Actions*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

[4] Connell, J.P., Gambone, M.A., & Smith, T.J. (May 2000). *Youth Development in Community Settings: Challenges to Our Field and Our Approach*. The Community Action for Youth Project.

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Center for Youth Development

Principles and Practices of CBO schools[5]

- Young people have the supports they need to learn
- Schools are personalized and flexible
- Expectations are High
- Learning is Challenging and Relevant
- Young people have opportunities to make a contribution

Milbrey McLaughlin/ Public Education Network

Dimensions of a Learning Environment[6]

- Safety
- Quality content and instruction
- Respond to diverse talents, skills, interests
- Build on strengths
- Choose appropriate materials
- Provide personal attention
- Reach out
- Trusting relationships
- Constant access
- Social capital
- Multiple "teachers"
- Feedback and recognition
- Clear rules
- Embedded curriculum
- Cycles of planning, practice, and performance
- Clear focus
- Feature youth leadership and voice
- Responsibilities for the organization

[5] Thomases, J. & Smith, S. (2000). *CBO Schools: An Educational Resource Whose Time Has Come*. Issue Brief I. Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development.

[6] McLaughlin, M. (2000, April, second printing). *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Public Education Network. The phrases here are subsumed in Community Counts under the general themes of "youth-centered," "knowledge-centered," "assessment-centered," and "community."

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Ensuring that these features exist in after school programs is no easy task. In addition to each one posing its own implementation challenges, these elements reflect an integrated set of practices that hang together in important and complex ways, with boundaries that often blur. The implementation of these elements will vary across programs based on several factors including the specific goals of the program, available resources, and the developmental stage of participants (see chart for age-appropriate illustrations of each element).

While some after-school programs may focus on delivering on certain of these elements (mentoring programs, for example, may place greater emphasis on role models and relationships than on personalized high-quality instruction), it is critical that programs be aware of the full range of key elements and ensure that at the very least, they do no harm in each of these areas.

In the section that follow, for each of the eight key elements of effective practice noted above we provide a description and discussion of the implications for after-school programming, highlights from supporting research, and a snapshot of each element in practice in the context of exemplary programs in the Boston area. Following this discussion of the elements, we examine each from the perspective of age appropriateness to understand how their implementation differs depending on the age/stage of program participants.

Safe, Stable Places

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Children and youth need access to stable places where they feel safe and a sense of ownership. One such place can – and should – be home. Others can be schools, religious organizations, community centers and after-school programs. Both physical and psychological aspects of safety important; in addition to ensuring the physical security of the participants and the facility, it is critical that programs provide a predictable structure and caring adults that children and youth can expect and rely on.

Research from several disciplines points to the importance of safe, stable places. Early cognitive theorists such as Piaget (1964) stressed the importance of stable, predictable environments in supporting children's learning and development. More recently, researchers examined the impact of "unsafe" environments on learning and development, finding that experiences of violence and bullying can lead to decreases in achievement and negative attitudes toward school (Scales and Leffert, 1999). On the positive side, evaluations of programs that emphasize school-wide conflict resolution, peer mediation, and direct teaching of social skills and self-management strategies have shown positive effects (Learning First Alliance, 2001).

Afterschool programs can address safety and stability through a variety of strategies. Specific practices that can increase safety and stability include providing safe environments, strategies that increase positive peer interaction, strategies that decrease unsafe or negative peer interactions, providing clear and consistent boundaries, structure and routines (National Research Council, 2002).

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Program Example: Boys and Girls Club of South Boston, South Boston, MA

The Boys and Girls Club of South Boston was founded in 1940 and has since served as a central resource for the surrounding neighborhood. The club offers multiple programming options including school-age after-school childcare and an afterschool teen drop-in program. The Club has a long- standing reputation in the neighborhood for providing a safe and caring environment. As most of the children and youth participating in the club live in two nearby housing developments, the stability and structure of the club make it a highly desirable option for parents. Many families, recently immigrated to South Boston, include enrollment at the Boys and Girls Club as a priority step in assimilating into the community.

Activities offered at the Club generally include choices such as gym, pool, arts and crafts, computers, cooking, discovery, and educational exploration. Having access to a caring, safe, and stable organization in the neighborhood allows families and youth to feel supported and focus on the diverse learning opportunities that are offered.

Basic Care and Services

Young people need access to basic care and services that are appropriate, affordable and, if necessary, confidential. Such services range from nutrition to physical, mental and reproductive health. While most after-school programs will not be equipped to deliver such services, they can play a key role as broker or referring agency. The degree to which participants' basic needs are being met obviously affects programs' ability to successfully engage them.

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Research clearly points to the fact that children's physical and emotional health are inextricably connected to their ability to learn and develop (Melaville et al., 2002; Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1989). Hunger has been found to limit overall cognitive functioning as well as social interactions (Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy, 1995). Children who suffer from malnutrition due to growing up in poverty experience delays in physical growth and motor development, often leading to lower expectations from caregivers, teachers and parents (Brown & Pollitt, 1996).
On the positive side, efforts to co-locate health-related services with schools have had positive results. Students that access school-based health services are more likely to graduate or be promoted than those who don't (McCord, et al., 1993). Students who need and participate in mental health interventions have better personal skills, achievement, and attendance, and exhibit fewer negative behaviors than non-participating students (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2000).

Program Example: Jackson/Mann Community Center, Allston, MA

The mission of the Jackson/Mann Community Center, opened in 1976, is to offer educational opportunities that support the development of health, wellness, and the arts for families, children, and community residents of all ages, abilities, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood. Services offered include a preschool, after-school program, summer camp program, teen club, a community learning center, adult basic education, external diploma program, ESOL, GED, and citizenship training.

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Children enrolled in the programs all benefit from the center's network of connections to health, arts, educational, and cultural organizations. Through its community connections the center offers Health Nights, parenting classes, mental health interventions, computer classes, teen discussion groups, and self-defense. Staff of the Community Center seek to address the needs of the whole family, by providing advocacy and referrals to necessary services and supports. A council of community residents who determine program policies and direction governs the Community Center.

Caring Relationships

Positive, supportive relationships – among peers and particularly between youth and adults – are perhaps the most fundamental components of any successful programmatic environment. Supportive adults provide guidance, show genuine interest, and are responsive, attentive, and non-judgmental. In after-school programs, these adults can include anyone from paid staff to community volunteers, to college students participating in service-learning activities.

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health suggests that students who feel "connected" to school, as measured by strength and quality of relationships with teachers and peers, are likely to have better attitudes toward school, learning and teachers. Connected youth also have higher academic aspirations, motivation, and achievement; more positive social attitudes, values and behavior; and are less likely to use drugs, be violent, or engage in other risk behaviors (Resnick et al., 1997). Positive support and high

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expectations from teachers is related to increased academic achievement (Comer, 1988; Eccles et al., 1998). In an experimental evaluation of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program (Grossman & Tierney, 1998) positive relationships with caring adult mentors resulted in increased academic achievement and attendance as well as a reduction in risk behaviors for participating youth.

Program Example: Dearborn After School Academy, Boston Community Learning Center, Roxbury, MA

The Boston Community Learning Center (BCLC) Initiative is managed through a partnership between the Mayor's Office of Community Partnerships, Boston Public Schools, Boston 2:00 to 6:00, Parent United for Child Care, and others. The goal of the BCLC model is to provide comprehensive school-based services and supports including academic assistance. The Dearborn Academy serves approximately 60 youth in the after-school program.

Every afternoon each youth is paired with a mentor/tutor undergraduate from Harvard University for homework and learning assistance. Participants also use an online tutoring/homework help program. There is a strong program focus on social and school readiness skills, and the program reinforces values such as time management, completing work on time, staying on track and managing a daily agenda.

Networks and Connections

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In addition to positive relationships with specific adults in programs, young people need opportunities to develop sustained, supportive connections and social and strategic networks. Such networks and connections are critical throughout child and youth development but become particularly critical for middle and high schools youth as they explore opportunities for postsecondary education and employment. In addition, meaningful connections across the various settings where young people spend time have been shown to support positive development (National Research Council, 2002), illustrating the importance of afterschool programs building meaningful bridges with families and schools.

Effective afterschool programs can help young people build "social capital" – by helping them forge relationships with community leaders and employers (McLaughlin, 2000). Such exposure can foster links between young people and critical social institutions that could otherwise remain distant. Youth who have access to rich developmental opportunities in their communities find themselves in fewer situations of risk and show higher rates of positive development than those who do not (National Research Council, 2002). Mentoring programs that connect high-risk youth with positive adult role models significantly decrease their likelihood of skipping school and using illegal drugs (Tierney et al., 1995).

Program Example: Citizen Schools, 12 sites across Boston, MA

Citizen Schools operates a network of after-school and summer enrichment programs at Boston elementary and middle schools for children ages 9 to 14. One of the key strengths

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of the Citizens Schools program is the apprenticeship component, through which small groups of students work with volunteer professionals on a learning project or performance – for instance, arguing a court case, writing a children's book, or designing a web page.

Through the apprenticeship component youth establish long-term relationships with community members and gain valuable insight and access to resources in the community. Youth typically complete 4 to 5 apprenticeships a year. Participants in Citizens Schools apprenticeships show high attendance and strong investment in the long term learning projects. Program data indicates that at least 75% of Citizens students improve in their awareness and utilization of local resources, such as museums and educational institutions. The apprenticeship design exposes youth to positive role models, builds career related aspirations and skills, and strengthens community participation and social networks.

Relevant, Challenging Experiences

Children and youth need challenging experiences that are appropriate and diverse and that provide them with opportunities to try new things, build skills and experience an increasing sense of competency. After-school programs should ensure that opportunities to learn and develop are relevant by offering choices and by building meaningful connections between the activities at hand and the experiences of the participants. While providing support for core academic learning has increasingly become the purview of some after-school programs, it is important not to overlook the unique opportunities such

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settings have to engage youth with creative and engaging activities that build on and extend school curricular content but also expose children and youth to new ideas, new skills and hobbies, and new learning experiences.

When young people feel that what they are learning is relevant, they are more likely to take more initiative, a key factor in improving performance (Larson, 2000). Larson's research suggests that American teens spend only a small percentage of their time "fully engaged" or in contexts where they report high levels of concentration, challenge and motivation. They are more likely to experience full engagement in the context of voluntary after-school programs than they are in school or during leisure time with friends. Research on motivation has also demonstrated that appropriate challenge, choice and autonomy, and relevance are features of learning experiences that engage and sustain student attention (Deci & Ryan, 1991, Patrick et al., 2000).

Program Example: Youth Click at the Hyde Park YMCA, Hyde Park, MA

The Youth Click program at the Hyde Park YMCA is funded through an innovation grant from the YMCA of Boston. The program is offered three days a week after school for 15 to 20 teenage youth that have a particular interest in photography or architecture, with a focus on building concrete skills and creating opportunities for community engagement and reflection.

Two days a week youth receive focused instruction from experienced photographers in photography basics through the YMCA's collaboration with the Boston Photo

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Collaborative. Additional instruction on interviewing and writing techniques is offered on the third afternoon at the YMCA. Youth record and document interviews with people in the community, photograph sites and examples of interesting architecture, and capture by camera images that reflect the lifestyle and pulse of the neighborhood.

High Expectations & Standards

Young people benefit from being in settings where adults have high expectations and hold them to clear standards. The staff of effective after-school programs intentionally create a culture of high expectations that affirms the potential of each participant and communicates clear expectations and standards concerning participation and behavior. Activities or projects include built-in opportunities for young people to present or demonstrate new competencies and to receive ongoing feedback from peers and adults.

Several studies have demonstrated that high expectations for all students combined with concrete opportunities to meet those expectations leads to increased motivation and engagement (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991; Harter, 1978; Heinzen, 1989; Paris & Turner, 1994). A growing body of research points to the fact that schools and classrooms with high expectations and a challenging curriculum foster increased student achievement (Schlecty, 1997; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Additionally, lack of support for academic achievement is related to disengagement from school and an increased likelihood of risk-taking behavior (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehard, 2000).

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Program Example: Grace Renaissance Academic Studies Program, Dorchester, MA

The Grace Renaissance Academic Studies Program (G.R.A.S.P.) aims to ensure the academic success of school age children by providing a safe, nurturing environment while offering intensive academic support, high expectations, and opportunities for enrichment and recreational activities. The Grace Church of All Nations, part of the Black Ministerial Alliance of Boston, manages G.R.A.S.P. The central focus of the after-school program is to motivate youth to be academically focused and to equip them to participate in the learning process with rigor and competitiveness.

G.R.A.S.P. collaborates with teachers, staff and administrators from the Boston Public Schools to determine the academic preparation needed and to develop appropriate curriculum for tutoring and test preparedness. Homework assistance, a specialized curriculum in literacy, math and science, and MCAS preparation for 3rd through 8th grade is offered. Five "virtues" featured and practiced in the program curriculum and activities inlcude: (1) communication; (2) cooperation; (3) conflict resolution; (4) appreciation for diversity; and (5) emotional expression. Program leaders emphasize raising youth's aspirations and standards. The program culminates in the Grasp for the Stars Award Ceremony.

Opportunities for Voice, Choice & Contribution

Children and youth need a range of formal and informal opportunities for age-appropriate participation and involvement in their families, schools, programs and communities. Effective after-school programs create a feeling of belonging and membership. A sense

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of connectedness facilitates the positive participation of children and youth within the program but is also a powerful predictor of later achievement. In addition to feeling that they belong, however, young people participating in high quality afterschool programs also have opportunities to develop a sense of ownership over the experience as a result of concrete opportunities to contribute as decision-makers, resources and leaders within their programs and in the community.

Children and youth need opportunities to make choices that go beyond picking between activity options and that increase in responsibility over time to include meaningful decision-making and leadership. After-school programs are well positioned to provide young people with much-needed opportunities to take on internal decision-making roles but also civic roles within the broader community. Opportunities to be productive contributing members within after-school settings can be particularly powerful for young people who feel relatively disconnected from other institutions.

Research on student engagement, autonomy, and the impact of community service experiences all supports the importance of this program element. Autonomy, self-direction, and influence are critical to development (Pittman & Wright, 1991; Ryan & Grolnick, 1984; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). More specifically, research has demonstrated that student engagement and enthusiasm are critical to achievement, school attendance, and staying in school (Finn, 1989, 1992).

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A growing body of knowledge supports the notion that early civic action by young people is a gateway for lifelong civic engagement (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997; Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1998). Community service programs are associated with improved personal and social development, a sense of civic responsibility, academic gains and aspirations, and decreased risk behaviors. Such programs appear to be most effective when they involve significant levels of responsibility, autonomy and choice, direct contact with service recipients, reflection activities, and well-prepared adult leaders (Billing, 2000).

Program Example: Project Hip-Hop, Boston, MA

Project Hip-Hop is an after-school institute for high school age youth serving approximately 25 -60 youth during the school year. Project Hip-Hop uses the history of resistance to racism and injustice to educate and empower youth to recognize themselves as agents of social change. Founded in 1993, the project provides skills and opportunities for youth to educate and organize others in their schools, communities and the wider society.

The program emphasizes building skills in five areas: (1) critical thinking; (2) communication; (3) research; (4) facilitating; and (5) organizing. Youth participate in activities such as "Rising Times" a bi-monthly newspaper, Urban Echo a youth-run radio program, presentations at schools, and peer discussion groups. Through discussion and field trips youth are exposed to historic examples of social justice action. At the beginning of each school year, youth select a social justice issue on which to focus their

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studies and activism. Staff offer modest facilitation, allowing youth to organize and implement their chosen social justice agenda. Integration with regular school classroom studies is also emphasized.

Personalized, High-Quality Instruction

Afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to provide flexible learning opportunities that meet the individualized needs and interests of participants. Personalized, high-quality instruction allows for student choice and problem-solving, includes active, cooperative learning strategies and requires attentive adult staff with expertise in specific content or skill areas as well as pedagogical training. Effective after-school programs maximize their flexibility in order to respond to the interests and build on the unique strengths of individual participants. Personalized, high-quality learning environments depend on quality instruction as well as focused content.

Effective afterschool programs tend to have at least one clear programmatic focus or content area (McLaughlin, 2000). Whether that focus is sports, arts, community service, entrepreneurship or some combination of those, such programs are intentional in their effort to help participants build skills through focused engagement with adults who have expertise in specific content areas.

Research underscores the need for personalized, high-quality instruction by demonstrating that children and youth learn about and understand the world in many different ways. Providing learners with a variety of approaches, mediums, and activities

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allows students with different learning styles to be successful (Gardner, 1991). Research on cooperative, active learning points to the importance of providing a range of individualized, small group and large group activities, as well as the need for hands-on learning activities that challenge participants to test ideas and solve problems (Piaget, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978).

Program Example: Jamaica Plain Multicultural After-school Arts Program, KidsArt, Jamaica Plain, MA

Serving over 35 K-5 children daily, KidsArt is a highly structured richly designed after-school program focusing on learning through creative arts. KidsArts uses a discipline-based arts curriculum. Topics such as Ancient Egypt, Medieval History, American migration patterns, are studied within the context of learning a creative art. Classes are offered during five 6 –8 week sessions and include choices such as origami, merengue, international cooking, woodworking, party crafts, opera to go, and Malian glass painting.

Instruction is personalized and reflects the interests and passions of the staff and children. KidsArts utilizes multicultural resources in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood along with partnerships with the Museum of Science, Boston Lyric Opera, and Boston Children's Theatre to enhance the quality of instruction offered. Learning is organized to be highly interactive and hands-on.

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Age-appropriate Practices in After-school Programming

Research suggests that the same basic inputs that support young children also positively impact older youth (Melaville, Shah, & Blank, 2002; National Research Council, 2002; Learning First Alliance, 2001). Both six-year-olds and sixteen-year-olds do better in environments that are safe and stable; offer or provide referrals to basic care and services; promote healthy, caring relationships; hold high expectations and standards; link them into networks and resources; offer relevant, challenging experiences; make space for voice, choice and contribution; and offer high quality instruction.

While the features of positive settings remain the same, their effective implementation varies along the developmental trajectory. Younger children demonstrate different cognitive and social needs than their older counterparts. A seven-year old's fascination with sorting their stuffed animals into groups may be characteristic of her emerging cognitive interest and ability for categorization. Likewise, the familiar request of the seven-year-old to have the teacher, "Look at this!" just as

At age 10, Samantha, like many others her age, looks forward to the end of the school day. She likes school, particularly her teacher Ms. Ellis, but Samantha does look forward to the afternoons. Her school jointly runs an after-school Passport Program with a community-based organization in the neighborhood. There is always something interesting to do. Each day has a regular set of activities. Samantha knows the routine, and likes it. Tuesdays and Thursdays, student tutors from her neighborhood high school come to her school to work with her on reading and writing. Wednesday, she and several other students visit the retirement community nearby the school, where they're creating a collection of stories about the experiences of older community members. Mondays and Fridays, she chooses between an arts workshop and a nature walk in a local park, both led by organizations in the community. Whatever day it is, she knows that she's going to spend her afternoon with an adult she knows well, get to move around and do something interesting. And her parents know, too, that the programs are flexible enough to work with the changes in their work schedule.

This fictional vignette is an age-appropriate snapshot of one child's out-of-school time experiences. Opportunities to choose between a few (but not too many) activities that meet and expand her abilities provide Samantha high quality instructional activities rooted in her interests. Collecting stories from residents in the retirement community allows for contribution, challenge and positive relationships. The combination of consistent and caring adults and a schedule she can rely upon contribute to an important sense of safety and stability. Samantha's involvement in tutoring as well as the reciprocal process of being told stories by the residents and documenting these stories contributes to an environment rich in high expectations as well as role models and networks.

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he dives into the swimming pool is accompanied by a wide grin when the adult responds, and represents a social development pattern very common to this age group.

In contrast, sixteen-year-olds navigate their social worlds through spaces that are independent of their families and focused, in larger part than before, on their peers. These youth can initiate and carry out tasks without the supervision required in their earlier childhood years. The opportunity to demonstrate what they can accomplish on their own is an important marker of adolescence, as is the need for recognition and appreciation of their competencies and contributions in the "adult world" (Feldman & Elliott, 1990). Participation in employment, managing an increasing number of complex social relationships, and deciding and taking responsibility for future plans are all examples of these competencies and contributions. In this context, the intensive and direct guidance that adults often provide to children is more effectively replaced by interactions that include sharing relevant

At 17, Delonte is an articulate speaker and a talented performer, almost always wearing a warm smile. Though slow to admit it, he is enjoying his first semester as a high school senior. In his Monday morning meeting with his advisor, conversations about the play he was reading in his literature seminar, his performance the following weekend with a local youth-led theater company, and his college applications flowed seamlessly together. His advisor and his drama coach are usually the ones who help him connect the pieces – schoolwork, out-of-school activities, his dreams for the future – though increasingly, he's learning to make those connections for himself. Monday afternoon he got to experience college first hand in a dual enrollment class. On Tuesday, his after school leadership club visited with the candidates running for open school board seats; he was able to use his communication skills to interview two of the candidates and will be working with his friend Steve during the next week to prepare a brochure summarizing where each candidate stands on issues youth care about. Wednesday and Thursday were his busiest days – he went to the local YMCA to teach dance after school, followed by play rehearsals. By Friday, he was grateful to have an afternoon off to spend with friends, and to pull the pieces of his week together before the play went up that weekend.

In this second vignette, Delonte also experiences the full range of developmental inputs, structured in a way that is appropriately aligned with his stage of development. The connections to resources and networks that move him toward concrete educational, vocational and civic engagement goals are essential to his development as a graduating senior; just as Samantha's connections to caring and consistent adults, high school-aged tutors as role models, and retirement community residents are critical to her development. Safe, stable places; high expectations; challenge and contribution and high quality instruction round out Delonte's picture as well, though he is increasingly making more of the connections for himself and learning how to tap his cadre of caring adults and peers as advisors and models to help him lay out his future path.

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personal experiences, modeling abstract expectations and posing critical questions to support and encourage young people's increasing levels of responsibility for personal decision-making (Karns & Myers-Walls, 1996; Ilfeld, 1996).

These developmental differences greatly impact the nature of high quality out-of-school time programming. Jacquelynne Eccles (1996) discussed the importance of "stage-environment fit," suggesting that settings should be appropriate over time and flexible enough to change in developmentally responsive ways as participants mature. After-school programs should be designed with increasing opportunities for autonomy, participation in program planning and delivery, leadership, and intellectual challenge (McLaughlin, 2000; Merry, 2000).

Recognizing that the features of effective programs evolve across the age range, a few models have translated their concepts and tools into age/stage relevant frames. Among these include the Search Institute's 40 Assets model and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's learning environment framework. Each have outlined ways in which the implementation or presence of various concepts vary when applied to the experiences of young children, middle school-aged youth or older teens. In their guide for leaders, *Ages and Stages of Child and Youth Development*, Karns and Myers-Walls (1996) discuss developmentally responsive 4-H youth programming across stages.

Extending its original work of developing the 40 Assets framework for adolescents, the Search Institute developed parallel frameworks to define the nature of assets for younger

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youth (Search Institute, n.d.). In the Search model, the assets have relevance for an individual throughout their development. For example, infants, toddlers, young children and older youth all benefit from creative activities. The approach to engagement in creative activities is different for each age group. For infants and toddlers, the emphasis is on simple exposure; for school-aged children the goal is intentional participation; and for older youth the focus appears to be on dedicated time spent building experience and skill in creative pursuits. High/Scope's learning framework breaks down key elements for effective practice at the level of programmatic implementation (Ilfeld, 1996). The threads of choice, active learning, intentional group structuring, encouragement, and a learning cycle called plan-do-review form the fabric of the educational approach for preschoolers, elementary-aged children, and older youth. The concept of "age-appropriateness" lies not in a major reorganization of the frames that describe the inputs into the learning environment, but rather in implementing those frames in developmentally responsive ways as young people mature.

The matrix that follows illustrates how the implementation of specific elements of effective practice varies across developmental stages and is informed by the models discussed earlier. The matrix is not intended to define static activity types, but rather to present examples that represent appropriate practices for different age groups. While the programmatic lines are blurred between directly adjacent age-peer groups (in select places on the chart, this is indicated by bi-directional arrows), and several activities and approaches can be "aged-up" or "aged-down" with purposeful tweaks, the general pattern suggests that as one goes up the developmental trajectory, activities, approaches and

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settings become more visibly and intentionally co-created and negotiated between young people and adults as well as increasingly dynamic, responding to evolving needs, interests, and abilities (National Research Council, 2002).

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	Early Elementary (ages 6–8)	Middle School (ages 9–11)	Young teens (ages 12–14)	Middle teens (ages 15-17)	Older teens (ages 18 & 19)
Safe, stable places	The Culture Club after-school program offers several choices within a consistent schedule. Snacks: 2:50; Play Space & New Games: 3:15; Homework Helpers: 4:15; Culture Club Discovery Workshops: 5:00. Staff stays until 6:30, when the last of the parents arrive from work.	In an effort to reduce the number of fights after-school, a core of volunteer parents, staff from a local community center and other adults greet students, providing "coverage" between the last school bell and students' traveling home or to after-school programs.	←← →→	The "House," a youth center housed in a converted church, is open every day from the time school ends until 9 p.m.; young people are welcome to eat, study, play sports, do laundry and talk with adults and peers when they are not participating in one of the center's programs.	
Basic care & services	→→	Four community-based after-school programs serving young people within one neighborhood jointly operate a van to pick up participants between sites and take them safely home.	A youth drama troupe creates original theater to address mental health issues impacting young teens in their neighborhood and help connect their peers to community resources.	Young people can come to the local teen center to do their laundry for free while talking with staff and peers.	Youth-run neighborhood or school-based health education centers allow for peer-to-pe education and outreach.
Healthy, caring relationships	Staff development and retention is a strong focus of the Rosa Parks After-school program. The director demonstrates support for staff through open communication and consistent follow-through on compensation and recognition, training, scheduling, and adequate program resources. Staff support allows the center to provide young people with consistent adults ready to focus on their needs in the program.	←← →→	Members of the Teen Club find a lot of support from each other in Express Yourself—a ritual the group initiated when they first joined. Before everyone leaves, members set aside time to share issues on their mind. Two adults provide a consistent presence, modeling listening, supporting an environment of psychological safety, and following up with individuals as needed.	Once a month, the Northend Neighborhood Center hosts a sleepover. Over 40 youth, adult staff and volunteers participate in the monthly event. They provide an opportunity for youth and adults to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere and an opportunity to build community within the center.	Peer street outreach workers make sure youth in the community are awa of the center's programs and resources. When youth come to the center, the same outreach workers greet them. Worke participate in the center's programs s they get to know participants and lea how programs can f participants' needs.
High expectations & standards	"Everybody cares for the center" is a motto practiced every day at Southend Neighborhood Club. During snack time, participants rotate being "on" for snack duty, helping with serving the snack and doing light clean-up afterwards.	The central focus of a neighborhood after-school program is to motivate youth to be academically focused and equip them to participate in the learning process with rigor and competitiveness. The program works with teachers and administrators to determine the academic supports needed and a curriculum for tutoring and test preparedness.	A teen center program co-creates program rules with young people and adults to facilitate an inclusive and safe environment for everyone. The group periodically reviews, revises and re-adopts the rules.	The Food Project uses "straight talk," a weekly discussion facilitated by having youth and adults in the program sit in a circle to provide honest, constructive feedback to each other. The group references the core organizational standards as a guide in these discussions.	←←

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Role models, resources & networks	Graduate students in a teacher education program staff a school-based after-school program; teachers and student teachers make regular communication links through face-to-face meetings and "passports" that each young person carries between school, after-school and home.	A small group of young people learns how to play the oboe with a private instructor from a music school based in the city. The beginning musicians received support to pay for their instruments and music instruction through funds jointly garnered by a local neighborhood arts program and their school.	A career specialist advises and helps youth select shadowing experiences, internships and professional mentors based on their interests.	←← →→	Upon high school graduation, student are assigned a "college transition coordinator" from their school for one year who stays in contact, provides support to "empty-nester" parents, coordinates alumni events, and helps connect and advise them as challenges difficulties arise.
Voice, choice & contribution	Young people in a reading program spend ½ hour reading to a guide dog in training, avoiding the social pressure of reading to other people while helping the guide dog get used to human contact.	←← →→	Young people spend time in a retirement community to listen to the stories of seniors and spend time with them. The youth will collect these stories into a book that will be distributed at the community fair.	Fifty cents of every purchase of coffee from a youth-run coffee delivery service in downtown Nashville goes to support their center's programming; the young people earn some income for themselves and their center as they learn the skills of running a small business.	Youth mobilizers design and run neighborhood tours for city business leaders, public officials, and community leaders interested in investi resources in their neighborhood or program.
Challenging, relevant experiences	→→	Young people learn how to write poetry through a creative writing course for young writers. Through word and drama games, and workshop methods, youth gain confidence and skill in putting their words into poetry. Young people are given the opportunity to perform one or more pieces in the end of the season poetry slam.	In a program for girls, participants explore various aspects of gender and identity through photography. The youth learn how to take good quality photos as they explore themes such as girls in sports, mothers and daughters, neighborhood, and popular concepts of beauty. At the end of six-weeks, the photos are displayed in a gallery that is open to the community.	In a peer health outreach club, participants develop skills to produce high-quality theater and present information on a range of health topics. Participants commit to learning dozens of facts to provide accurate information on a variety of topics and create original theater around health themes. To remain peer educators, participants take a rigorous written and oral exam created by the previous year's team.	Youth Owned Recor (YOR) produces original music from area youth; the cor group is responsible for the music, tech, production and promotion of their CDs. A portion of t proceeds goes back into the teen center out of which YOR is based.
High Quality, Personalized Instruction	After viewing a short video on dragons in the Chinese New Year, participants ask and answer questions about Chinese customs and traditions and discuss key features of Chinese dragons. The young people then tour tables filled with art supplies and are supported by adults to make their own dragons. Everyone who wants to can present on their progress and talk about their favorite parts of the dragon they made.	A community dance troupe goes on a field trip to see a modern dance performance. They returned from the trip excited about the dance props (ribbons, scarves, hats, etcetera). The instructor taps into this excitement and brings catalogues in showing various dance props. The troupe picks two props they would like to use in future dances. The instructor guides them through planning how to make their own props and use them in future dances.	After electing to have a Girls Night sleep over at the center, the group of African American girls is excited to do each other's hair in cornrows, braids and other styles. Several of the girls were good braiders and others wanted to learn. Staff identified volunteers to who are master braiders. As the youth took turns braiding, eating and talking, volunteers shared anecdotes about the history of braids and different braid designs.	Poetry slams are popular events at the Zone. Youth form groups that review and practice poetry together. Beginners are welcome, and seasoned youth participants help create a safe space for all to take creative risks. To gain skill, interested youth join weekend workshops taught every other month by their peers or college students. Slams are held every few months, and there are opportunities to join a competitive slam team.	←←

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While the chart focuses on specific practices across the developmental spectrum, the two vignettes about Samantha and Delonte illustrate how after-school experiences play out from the perspective of two young people in very different stages of development. Integrated, developmentally appropriate, engaging experiences like those of Samantha and Delonte do not occur coincidentally. Their stories represent an ideal not matched in reality in far too many young people's experiences. In the words of a Lilly Endowment report, "youth development is not a happenstance matter." Ensuring that all children and young people have the opportunities and supports they need requires a great deal of effort and coordination.

Certainly more resources and better alignment are critical, but at a more basic level, the clarity of purposes, level of focus and perceptions of the public around positive youth development along the developmental trajectory appears uneven. Programming for young children focuses on supporting all aspects of development and centers around the expectation that they will be taken care of all the time, not just at certain times of day. Once young people reach elementary school, out-of-school programming is most often based upon academic support, recreational or physical health and safety models, and the emphasis is on caring for children in the gap between times when the school and workday end.

Older youth experience an increase in the diversity of programming options, but actual out-of-school opportunities often shrink in numbers. In addition, program offerings become more targeted, engaging youth in just one or two spheres of development (e.g.

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sports, gifted academic programs). The oldest youth experience a sudden drop-off in the number of available programs, supports and opportunities. The programming that does exist tends toward an emphasis on civic and vocational outcomes, or takes on a "remedial" or "second chance" focus. If a young person does not go on to college or move easily into the workplace, they quickly find themselves in an environment almost devoid of structured supports and opportunities (Tolman, Pittman, Yohalem, Thomases, & Trammel, 2002).

A trend toward the narrowing of opportunities (either in number or variety) as young people mature suggests an inconsistent and insufficient investment in learning and growth, and raises the probability of missed opportunities to support development. Communities struggling with questions about what it takes to better fill the out-of-school time space for all young people face common tasks and challenges. Struggles to build strong relationships between public players and community-based organizations, discussions about quality standards and staff development, and building committed leadership among elected officials are representative of critical issues that communities are grappling with across the country. We present these challenges as the topic of the next section.

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IV. CHALLENGES

What does it take to create after school programs with the elements described in the previous section – programs that support youth development and learning in settings where young people consistently experience the supports and opportunities they need during the out-of-school hours?

This question has important answers at the program level. Programs and institutions face the consistent challenges of ensuring quality and continuity of supports, building staff and organizational capacity, securing adequate and aligned resources, and maintaining public support. The program-level view is critical, but creating effective after-school programs also present citywide challenges related to building quality and continuity, developing resources, and creating a climate where investments in high-quality after-school programs are adequate and sustained. Creating such a climate means nurturing broad public understanding and appreciation of all the benefits and possibilities of a youth development approach. Conversations with city leaders in Boston reinforced these as local, in addition to national trends.[7]

What, then, are the common challenges facing programs and cities committed to creating after-school opportunities that support youth development and academic achievement? Networking, research, and technical assistance efforts undertaken by NIOST and the

[7] In preparation for this White Paper, NIOST conducted three focus groups with out-of-school time providers, 15 site visits to after-school programs, and personal interviews with multiple city leaders. The Forum drew on conversations with dozens of city-level stakeholders conducted during the GRASP project.

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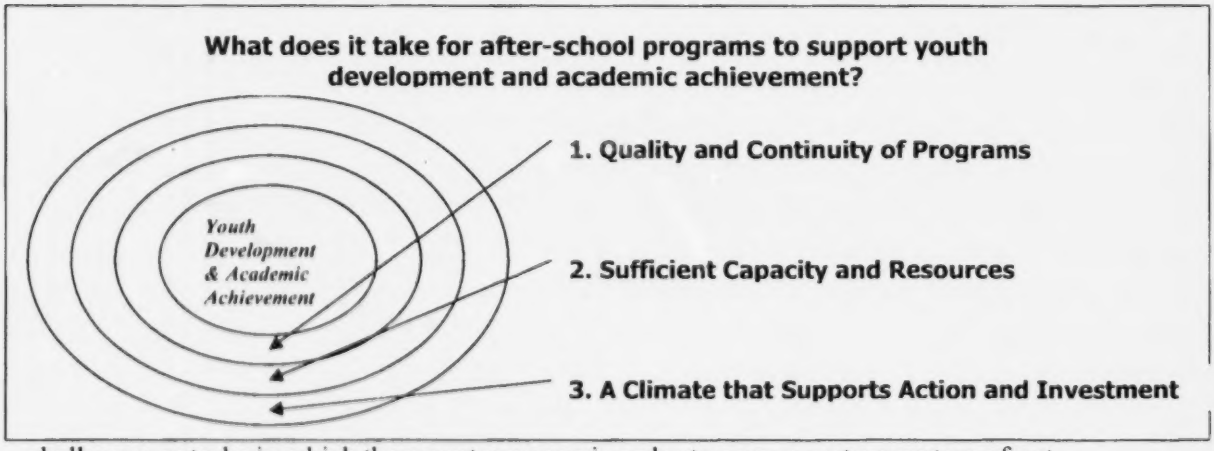
Forum in Boston and around the country indicate that three sets of common challenges exist:

1. The first set of challenges for cities is creating a strong base of programs, of consistently high quality, that ensures continuity of supports and opportunities for young people.
2. Adequate resources and investments in capacity, including sustained and sufficient public and private investments as well as the human, organizational, and physical infrastructure that make quality programming possible.
3. None of this can happen without a supportive climate for action – the combination of demand, leadership, accountability, and vision that make sufficient and sustained investments possible.

Like young people's own growth, the process by which programs and cities come to support youth is a developmental one. Localities and organizations face a common set of


What does it take for after-school programs to support youth development and academic achievement?
Youth Development & Academic Achievement
1. Quality and Continuity of Programs
2. Sufficient Capacity and Resources
3. A Climate that Supports Action and Investment

challenges or tasks in which they must progress in order to grow a mature system of out-of-school supports. As with development, attention to all tasks is critical, given their

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interdependent and complementary nature. And as with young people, the development of out-of-school time infrastructure is uneven. There is perhaps a handful of cities nationally with fairly "mature" infrastructures, a second tier that are asking the right questions but still struggling to find the answers, and another set that have not begun nurturing the development of an out-of-school infrastructure. Communities ahead in addressing some issues are far behind in others, and progress toward one task does not guarantee equal progress in others.

Recognizing that the process of increasing the capacity of after-school programs to support young people developmentally and academically is itself a developmental one, it may be useful for programs and cities to understand what a "mature" system looks like, and to map the developmental pathway that will move their city toward that end goal. With this in mind we share experiences of cities at various points along that developmental continuum.[8]

Critical Challenges facing Cities and Organizations

Program/Practice
Quality
Continuity

Infrastructure
Capacity
Resources

Climate
Demand
Information & Accountability
Leadership
Vision

The first set of tasks involves creating a strong base of programs, of consistently high quality, that ensure continuity of supports and opportunities for young people. For after-school programs to support learning and development, programs must embody a vision of quality rooted in what we know about development. Just as critical as quality of

[8] The descriptions of challenges draw primarily from research conducted through the GRASP Project – Greater Resources for After-School Programming – a two-year effort by the Forum for Youth Investment to map the out-of-school landscape in cities around the country. The details on how these challenges play out in Boston are based on stakeholder interviews and focus groups conducted by NIOST, as well as on NIOST's long-term involvement in out-of-school issue in Boston.

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individual programs, is continuity within and across programs – such a seamless web of supports is a critical factor in young people's development.

Quality

Quality speaks to the ability of programs to deliver basic developmental inputs, which translate into practices and principles at the staff, program, and organizational level, and which result in positive outcomes for participants. Defining quality from an *inputs* perspective – focusing on the elements of effective programs described in the last section – can lighten the burden of expecting individual programs to document their impact on youth *outcomes*, a dubious proposition given the number of forces present in young people's lives and the limited capacity of programs to engage in rigorous outcome evaluation. Given the increasing evidence linking developmental inputs and positive outcomes – and the growing consensus on what makes for quality programs among researchers and practitioners – individual programs would better focus their organizational resources on ensuring that features of effective programs are in place.[9]

Taking this definition of quality as a starting point, cities and organizations are developing or adapting program quality standards, designed as a common foundation for capacity-building efforts, staff development, funding decisions, coalition-building, and organizational decision-making. Many after-school leaders in Boston pointed to the need for Boston to establish a set of agreed upon standards. Standards can create a common

[9] A meeting hosted by the Forum brought together researchers, city-level official, and national organizations to compare the instruments used to measure program quality, revealing remarkable consistency across instruments and definitions of quality. For more information, visit www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/youthprogramquality.htm.

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language and dialogue across program types allowing all stakeholders to have a common understanding of quality. As a strategic tool, standards can help identify needs, allowing for a data-driven improvement agenda.

Establishing citywide standards – a process already taken up by Baltimore, Philadelphia, Columbus, and Kansas City – would be a major step forward for Boston. Standards development efforts could draw on existing definitions of quality while crafting something that young people, providers, and funders ensure is locally relevant. A possible starting point is The Standards for Quality School-Age Care of the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA), already used by many programs. Establishing citywide standards in Boston could help guide the allocation of funds, promote consistency, create goals for staffing and program development, and stimulate strategic planning; all pre-conditions to creating high quality after-school opportunities that support youth development and academic achievement.

City Snapshot: Building Quality Standards in Kansas City

A growing number of cities are beginning to develop standards documents relevant to adolescents and older youth — requiring a different process and different content than when standards have been developed for elementary-school-age programs. One critical difference: young people must be at the table for the standards to be relevant to their needs and experiences. YouthNet of Greater Kansas City, a network of youth-serving organizations with a history as a capacity-building intermediary, was among the first to take on the challenge of developing teen program standards. The process involved the development of teen surveys distributed in schools, brainstorming sessions on "what makes a good program," and the review of national program resources on teens. Based on information collected, a draft of teen standards was created. This draft was disseminated to agency representatives and teenagers for their input and review. YouthNet believes that by involving both youth and agency members, it has created not only a quality assessment tool of the standards of teen programs, but also a "philosophical shift — because of the participation of youth in the process."

As Boston takes on the standards development process, it will be useful to keep in mind several lessons from other cities. First, standards are most likely to improve quality when organizations have the support necessary to both effectively assess how well they are

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meeting standards and to use the standards as the basis for their capacity-building efforts. Second, stakeholder engagement in the standards development process – including young people, funders, and program providers in particular – is critical, however universal and non-negotiable standards of quality might appear. Third, the realities of the developmental process mean that standards for middle- and high-school youth are likely to look different than those for elementary-age young people (see sidebar). Finally, "quality" and "standards" should never come to mean a lack of diversity – a variety of opportunities, within and across programs, is a hallmark of quality.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is presently developing a Statewide Policy on Youth[10] using a framework based on youth development principles. Endorsing the Statewide Policy and seeing its infusion into programs and practices throughout the city will be an important step in moving Boston towards building quality standards.

The increasing number of multi-lingual and multi-cultural students in Boston poses additional challenges related to program quality. Some youth have little proficiency in their native language in addition to low English proficiency and thus feel left out even in bilingual settings. Program leaders point out the need for staff that represent each culture or can speak participants' languages to help overcome significant communication barriers with parents and families. Staff development needs to build cultural sensitivity. The National League of Cities suggests that municipal and program leaders collaborate to "develop programs that respond to cultural diversity. Broadening access for these

[10] The Statewide Policy is being developed under the leadership of a team of professionals from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Public Safety, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Department of

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populations requires the development of programs that are rooted in their cultural traditions, including the selection of staff and curricula that are appropriate for children whose first language is not English."

Continuity

Looking at after-school programs from a developmental perspective also affirms the importance of continuity – across ages, across times of day, and across the settings in which young people find themselves. Continuity involves linking to the range of other supports and opportunities present in a young person's life – realizing, in short, a vision of after-school programs as what Gil Noam (2002) calls "intermediary environments":

> "produced by vibrant collaborations between different institutions and focuses such as schools, families, community-based organizations and cultural institutions and university programs … giving children a safe platform for exploration of the various forms of learning and helping them to situate their learning in the wider context of their communities…."

After-school programs are part of a web of supports for young people's learning and development, and can serve a critical role in building connections and continuity across that range of learning experiences. A successful Boston city strategy to build quality programming must consider continuity from three angles: (1) continuity from early childhood through adulthood, (2) continuity across the organizations and settings in

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which young people spend time, and (3) continuity across times of the day, days of the week, and times of the year.

This vision begs a number of questions. Are programs connected to young people's experiences before (during the school day) and afterwards (evenings with families, or perhaps other programs for older youth)? Do they reach down to the environments where young people spent time at younger ages, and up to the environments where young people find themselves when they "age out"? Do they create a "ladder of opportunity," in the words of Joan Wynn, within their programs – ensuring a progression of experiences and leadership opportunities over time? Do they create intentional links to other places where young people spend their time? Do they, in short, add up to part of a larger whole, across time, ages, and settings?

Building continuity across ages is particularly important. Research emphasizes that high-quality learning opportunities need to be early and sustained – that investments in young children are not sufficient to "inoculate" young people to future developmental challenges. Yet many programs in Boston limit their services to children age 5-12. Attention should focus on expanding after-school opportunities for older youth and expanding the capacity of current organizations serving younger children to "extend their reach" by serving youth longer. Programs such as Youth Click (Section II) have successfully tapped into older youths' interests and been able to craft engaging activities that sustain the interest and enthusiasm of older participants. Several effective programs have found it easy to retain older youth as junior staff, volunteers, etc., with increasing

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levels of responsibility and recognition. On the other hand, the tendency of adolescents to explore multiple environments, and their specific developmental needs mean that growing more programs specific to older youth is also critical.

Individual programs bear some share of the responsibility for creating continuity; programs like Citizen Schools do a good job of building connections inside and outside of the program, and across a number of years. However, achieving continuity with any level of consistency and scale requires systematic investments, such as those starting to be made in Chicago (see sidebar on Chicago).

City Snapshot: Building a Ladder of Participation in Chicago

"I would want to build a ladder of opportunity for kids — across places and times and ways of contributing. We should provide opportunities for youth that move from participation, to contribution, to access to internships and meaningful first jobs. The message that sends to young people: As you build competencies through these experiences, we're going to recognize that, and increase the level of responsibility and recognition in response."

This is how Joan Wynn, a researcher at the Chapin Hall Center for Children in Chicago, explains the big idea behind After School Matters – a new public-private partnership in Chicago aiming to reach half of the city's high school-aged young people with quality out-of-school programs by the year 2012. The core of After School Matters is a set of sports, arts, writing, and technology programs operated by clusters of schools, parks, and libraries, and based on a successful arts apprenticeship model pioneered by Gallery 37. But to help create the sort of continuity that Wynn and others imagine, a variety of strategies surround and are built into this core program. Wynn describes one, a way to link together young people's out-of-school experiences by providing a common space to recognize and reflect on these experiences:

"Something I'm working on with After School Matters and the city, the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago City Colleges is how to acknowledge what young people are doing in the out-of-school hours. Whether that's taking care of siblings or painting and repairing a house over the summer, they ought to get recognition for that ... We're creating a Web-enabled portfolio and résumé builder that's meant to engage kids in a highly supportive coaching process ... that recognizes what kids do across the spectrum of their out-of-school lives — this is what I do at home, in the community, through service learning, internships and jobs. It will be a personal record for any 13- to 21-year-old that will capture what they've done, and the knowledge, skills and personal qualities they've demonstrated in the process."

While only one piece of a larger picture, this new tool – when put alongside strong partnerships between schools, organizations, and other institutions; staff and organizations whose specific responsibility is to act as relationship brokers at the neighborhood and city level; and investments by individual program providers in connections – has the promise to build continuity for Chicago's young people.

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If quality and continuity of programming are the goals, then adequate resources and investments in capacity are next critical tasks. Investments in capacity are needed at the program and city levels – in quality staffing, program standards, and organizational horsepower – strategies aligned with what it takes to support youth development and learning. This capacity, in turn, requires additional resources –financial and physical – aligned with developmental realities, sustained over time, and sufficient to support standards of quality.

Capacity-Building Challenges for Programs

Capacity

- ***Quality of programming*** (clear standards, tested approaches, innovative models)
- ***Quality of staff*** (accreditation, professional development, networking opportunities, compensation)
- ***Organizational health*** (including not just standards for programming and staff, but organizational management and sustainability)

Capacity

Capacity at the program level means adequate, stable, well-trained staff and well-run programs and organizations. For after-school programs to deliver on their commitment to support development and learning, capacity-building efforts should have several common features. Most evidently, it is important to ask if staff and organizational development efforts are consistently aligned with a picture of quality that puts young people's development at the center, and is linked to ongoing assessments of how well programs are responding to those developmental needs.

The Massachusetts School-Age Coalition has already developed the Core Competencies for Massachusetts School-Age Practitioners. The competencies capture the essential

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knowledge and skills practitioners need to provide quality services. They provide a standard of what competent practitioners should know and do, as well as a tool to assist Massachusetts school-age professionals in establishing a common language and understanding about high-quality school-age care (Massachusetts School-Age Coalition). Boston's challenge is to implement and fully adopt the competencies. To the extent that public funding may be contingent upon the demonstration of full adoption of the core competencies, Boston should build in specific funding and technical support for providers to ensure that they can meet eligibility requirements.

City Snapshot: Using Standards to Build Capacity in San Francisco

A unique collaboration between researchers (Michelle Gambone and Jim Connell), a local intermediary (Community Network for Youth Development), San Francisco Bay Area community-based organizations, and local funders is proving that some things do work to improve program quality. The eight participating organizations agreed to take part in an intentional effort to provide the basic supports and opportunities that young people need: caring relationships, challenging experiences, high expectations and the like. Young people involved in the organizations were surveyed against this list of basic supports, and the results indicated that many organizations were not offering as much of these basic supports as they wanted to. In response, CNYD, Gambone and Connell worked with the organizations for one year to increase their ability to deliver basic supports and opportunities. A year later, young people rated their organizations at higher levels — sometimes markedly so — across many categories.

A range of perennial staffing challenges – high turnover, in particular – take on heightened importance when viewed through a developmental lens. Retention challenges, often conceived primarily as a logistical and training issue, are paramount when continuity, positive adult relationships, and stable environments are understood as critical program elements. Recent work by Gambone and Connell, in partnership with Community Networks for Youth Development, has linked a number of such organizational and staff capacity issues with their list of key supports and opportunities – for instance, low staff to student ratios are a key indicator of whether it's possible to have caring adult relationships (see sidebar on San Francisco).

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Challenging staffing issues in the out-of-school time field in Boston are plentiful. McLaughlin (2000) suggests that the adults who work in OST organizations have no professional recognition beyond the doors of their organization. The field of out-of-school time in Boston needs a career structure in which professional development is associated with compensation and benefits and there is an agreed upon set of competencies that professionals possess. Providers repeatedly voiced concerns that the field needs a systemically changed view of the profession; one where it is recognized and valued. Any successful effort to build and sustain a professional development system will require: (1) a long-term commitment of public funding, and (2) state agencies and legislative leaders who recognize their role in developing and supporting a coordinated system.

A key step to reducing high levels of staff turnover is to create a more substantial career ladder for after-school and youth development workers. NLC reports that "several cities have used professional development credentials or degrees as the basis for moving staff from entry-level to master-level roles and responsibilities, enhancing compensation at each step along the way."

The State of the OST Workforce in Boston

- 56% annual turnover rate in after-school programs.
- Low wages: $9.29 per hour (average of group leaders and assistant group leaders).
- Minimal to no benefits.
- Poor working conditions.
- Program isolation (geographic).
- Lack of career advancement opportunities.
- Inadequate funding for training and education.
- Training and education opportunities that are uncoordinated, unsequenced, and do not result in defined benefits for staff or programs.
- No career lattice that would offer staff a vision of professional growth.
- No systems approach yet in place in Boston or the state.

Several program leaders expressed other frustrations in the recruiting and training process. Increasing numbers of multi-lingual students in Boston necessitates

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staffing patterns that reflect the diversity and language need of the programs. It is increasingly hard for providers to recruit appropriate language-skilled staff. Additionally, some program leaders have found that many staff do not have the educational support or background to fully utilize professionally developed curriculum resources and guides.

Building exemplary programs also requires a commitment to knowledge building activities. What program and needs assessments have been done in Boston and what have they found? Which program strategies through reliable documentation are clearly linked to youth well-being and academic achievement and how can they be replicated in other programs? Knowledge building activities need to happen for program leaders and staff as well as municipal leaders, school leaders, funders, and other stakeholders.

There are many good examples of positive youth development strategies working in Boston after-school programs as exemplified in Section II. However, in order to intensify the use of positive youth development strategies, providers and program staff need opportunities to come together to share best practices. All frontline staff would benefit and be better equipped to infuse positive youth development strategies into their programs should they have the appropriate knowledge and training. Providers need to know what other organizations are doing and how to implement new ideas/activities. Organizations within the same neighborhood are often isolated and operate without taking advantage of each other's resources.

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The BEST initiative, a program of the Medical Foundation and the National Training Institute at the Academy for Educational Development, was launched in 1998. The Youth Worker Training Certificate Program provides youth workers the skills to better impact the lives of youth. The training is focused on core skills and competencies, the youth development approach, and professional development for youth workers. Participants are awarded a certificate recognized by a collaboration of youth-serving agencies and the City of Boston. To date BEST has served youth workers from more than 130 organizations. Its Agency Collaborative has 93 member agencies, more than 50 of which have institutionalized the training as part of their staff development.

Parents United for Child Care's (PUCC) APEX certificate program represents an important effort to involve institutions of higher education in training the after-school workforce. School-age providers participated in the six-course certificate program offered in connection with Bunker Hill Community College. The program enabled participants to acquire core knowledge, improve their practice, and receive recognition from their employers. More than half of the 30 participants earned increased compensation, received promotions, and chose to build careers in the after-school field.

Currently NIOST, PUCC, BEST, Boston 2:00-to-6:00, BGCB, and the YMCA are working together to develop a competency framework for school-age and youth worker training that offers a coherent picture of the full range of necessary skills. Under the leadership of Boston 2:00-to-6:00, the city has just committed resources for the initial phase of the project.

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These efforts begin to lay the groundwork for the larger task of creating a comprehensive and coherent infrastructure for staff development for all of Boston's school-age providers and youth workers. Expanding the work of BEST, PUCC, and similar initiatives as part of building a comprehensive framework for professional and workforce development is crucial to the development of quality programs in Boston.

Resources

Resources at the program level refer to both dollars for direct services and dollars for staff development, facilities and long-term planning. At the city level, these resource issues relate most obviously to the goals of quantity and access – are there enough spaces in programs, and are they available to all young people? But the resource question is different – no less important – if the focus is on ensuring that programming reflects what we know about development and learning, rather than solely on issues of scale.

Resource Challenges for Programs

- ***Adequate facilities and supports*** (location and safety/quality of space, availability and ease of transportation)
- ***Adequate, stable program budgets*** (sufficient funds per child/youth to cover program related expenses)
- ***Adequate, stable operating budgets*** (sufficient funds to cover staff salaries, ongoing training, organizational capacity building, facilities upgrades, links to other providers)

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Consider the challenges of facilities and transportation. Often, efforts to ensure that out-of-school programs have adequate space focus on the basics – ensuring that *any* space is available, and that the available space meets basic standards of safety and accessibility. But for facilities to support learning and development, more is required – spaces shaped by young people's input, conducive to small group activity and one-on-one time with adults, and co-located with basic support services, for instance (see sidebar on Phoenix). Space continues to be a challenge in Boston. After-school programs are often squeezed into spaces that are inadequate in size or not conducive to recreational activity. Many outdoor and indoor spaces are underutilized in the city for lack of a coordinated effort to maximize what is available.

Similarly, transportation is usually viewed from the perspective of access, cost and safety for

young people. Yet young people's transportation needs change in fundamental ways as they get older – exploring more and more diverse environments, with a greater degree of autonomy, and with more direct interaction with the adult world. With this in mind,

City Snapshot: Designing a Space for Teens in Phoenix

When taking on the challenge of designing a new teen center inside its flagship public library, the city of Phoenix realized more than architectural expertise was required. For the library's leadership, it was common sense that young people should be the ones designing and running the new space. Over the course of the summer of 2001, the library held a series of workshops to shape the design, make decisions about furnishings, determine space allocations, and create the culture of the place. More than 30 young people stuck with the process from initiation through the construction phase. The architect – though new to working with young people – took the task seriously, making clear that the young people were the design team, both clients and partners in the project.

The design principles and features that resulted reflect young people's voices – and what is known about development. In the words of one of the adults that helped facilitate the process, "Basically what they did – they started brainstorming – we want a place to hang out, where people treat us like adults, where we can find the information that we need. The architect took ideas and synthesized it into plans. Books aren't going to be dominant force in room. There will be lots of glass walls – the young people wanted a feeling of separation, but want to be seen – intimacy and visibility. There will be music playing in space. They were looking for a café space – a Starbucks-like setting – and a gallery wall." In short, the young people designed a space that was *theirs* – and participated in a process applicable to the range of settings where young people spend their out-of-school time.

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public transportation options (reduced or free fare programs, for instance) are likely the transportation solution of choice for adolescents, while specialized transportation (school busses, vans, etc.) is the most appropriate option for elementary-age children.

The most important and persistent resource challenges – those having to do with program and organizational financing – also deserve consideration from a developmental perspective. One
obvious but important reminder: programs that support young people's development and learning are consistently more expensive than those that provide basic supervision or skill-and-drill academics. They require more qualified and better supported staff, more developed programs, and healthier organizations – in short, more capacity, and thus more financial support. This investment in increased capacity – at the program level, but even more importantly at the city level – is perhaps the most critical role of private foundations and philanthropists.

Concerns about their ability to sustain current program offerings, let alone enhance activities, dominate the thoughts of out-of-school time providers and staff in Boston. Providers and staff lament the frequent lack of flexibility in funding guidelines and reporting requirements. In its 1998 Site Visit Report on Boston, the Federal Support for Communities Initiative observed that "providers face enormous administrative burdens when they must repeatedly submit the same information to various agencies and even to a single agency for various grant programs. Not only do formats, deadlines, and program/application requirements vary among agencies, but also among grant programs

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with a single agency. Programs require different needs assessments, planning processes, and procedures for measuring outcomes, accountability standards, and performance measures" (Ginsberg et al., 1998, p. 5).

More recently a focus on academic support has forced programs to shift away from activities that, although believed to be worthwhile and ultimately to impact learning, cannot be incorporated under funding guidelines. Finally, providers and program staff express concern that funders don't understand what it takes to make quality out-of-school opportunities happen. High expectations from funders are not matched by high levels of funding.

Using Prevention Funds to Support Out-of-School Opportunities

Research on problem prevention demonstrates that effective programs share a common core of features – and that these features are the same set of developmental inputs described earlier in this paper - caring adult relationships, high expectations, and the like. Thus, an investment in after-school programs that support youth development is an investment in problem prevention – and thus a justifiable use of prevention dollars.

One statewide program has made this connection. The Friday Night Live program was founded in 1984 by two California agencies — the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs and the California Office of Traffic Safety — with the aim of reducing fatalities and injuries caused by teenagers driving under the influence. Because of its successes, the program grew quickly — in four years, Friday Night Live expanded from one to 54 of California's counties. Though starting with a narrow mandate related to drug and alcohol abuse, Friday Night Live has recognized the out-of-school hours, and a focus on helping youth become fully prepared and fully engaged, as its best route to its prevention goals. Now the statewide, state-funded program engages young people in community action projects, youth mapping efforts and youth-to-youth mentoring, in environments rich with positive adult relationships and high expectations.

Funders need to understand that program improvement is a developmental process that entails organizing activity planning, systems for hiring/orientation/training, fiscal procedures, etc. Currently, private dollars are often the only source of support for the community infrastructure – independent intermediaries, capacity-builders, etc. – necessary to support high-quality

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programming. The recently formed Boston After-School for All Partnership brings together 14 private funders. While this partnership is fortunate for Boston, the future of high quality after-school programming rests on the city's capacity to attract strong public financial support. There is no substitute for public funding if programming is to be provided at scale.

Categorical and fragmented funding is perhaps the most pressing obstacle to consistently high quality programming – and in particular to programs that support young people's development. Finding ways to better align federal, state, and local funding streams – through standards-based funding processes, new intermediaries that merge funding sources and then re-grant them, and new forums to bring together funders – is critical if funding is to better support young people's development (see sidebar on Prevention Funds).

Finally, for resources and capacity to be sustained at the necessary scale, cities need to create a climate conducive to action. Sustained demand – supported by diverse, engaged constituencies, including young people themselves – makes possible investments in the sorts of opportunities for learning and development described here. Leadership – individual and organizational, from a range of sectors – complements this grassroots demand. Systems of accountability – information and data systems, ways of monitoring and encouraging progress toward common standards and goals – are also part of a climate that supports opportunities for development and learning. A shared vision of success,

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and sustained structures for coordination and planning that align efforts with this vision, is what knit an otherwise fragmented set of activities together. Investments in this range of citywide climate issues are as critical as programmatic investments, though often neglected by both private and public funders.

Demand

Public commitment to after-school programming remains remarkably strong, with voters continuing to say that all young people deserve access to things to do after school, and that they will pay higher taxes to ensure such opportunities are available. Massachusetts 2020 (2002) recently conducted a statewide survey of parents asking about key issues around out-of-school time. The results of the survey indicated that parents in Massachusetts overwhelmingly believe "schools alone cannot give their children the skills they need to succeed and that they need to participate in further learning, sports, arts and other activities after school and during the summer" (Massachusetts 2020, 2002).

> "It takes a multifaceted approach. There is no easy formula – you need to have all the pistons running at the same time. Juggling all the balls simultaneously creates the tidal wave. You need to create the wave then catch it. Align politics and grassroots advocacy. Set up a department focused on all kids. Promote youth voice. Build communities and their non-profits. Create a cadre of like-minded individuals throughout the bureaucracies..."
>
> **Debbie Alvarez-Rodriguez**
> **City of San Francisco**

With public support so strong, the challenge now is to focus, deepen, sustain, and mobilize this strong – but often vague – commitment. Work in other cities indicates several promising strategies as Boston builds on its current base of public will. Advocates could create engagement and education efforts around the core features of effective program environments – building commitment to a shared picture of quality, rather than

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to the general idea that young people should have something to do. They can take on efforts to shift negative perceptions of young people – one of the most consistent obstacles to investments in young people's development and learning, as opposed to investments in problem prevention and remediation. And they can aim to build a broad appreciation of the importance of out-of-school time, rather than a narrow focus on school-based programs for elementary-aged children. Advocacy efforts framed in these ways are likely to result in sustained rather than short-term commitments.

A variety of organizations and constituencies play roles in building this commitment to development and learning. Parent and community organizing efforts, local education funds, child advocacy organizations, and provider alliances are all natural starting points for the sort of engagement effort described above. Young people themselves are perhaps the most powerful advocates for investments in development and learning and have been critical to successful campaigns for program quality standards, better facilities, accessible transportation, and increased investments in programming in cities around the country. Creating opportunities for youth input and advocacy is an important task to be accomplished at both the program and city level.

In Boston, Parents United for Child Care has played a key role in out-of-school time advocacy, helping solidify the necessary public and political commitment. Since 1992 PUCC has served as the lead organization for the Boston MOST Initiative, researched and documented the local need for school age care, raised money for out-of school time programs, and advocated for expansion of out-of-school time opportunities in Boston.

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Solidifying PUCC's current role and capacity is crucial for mobilizing public will in Boston – as is building the capacity of other constituency-building efforts that reach out to youth, civic leaders, specific neighborhoods, etc.

Information and Accountability

Effective city-level systems for mapping and tracking activities during the out-of-school hours are few and far between. In many cities, only the roughest estimates of the number of programs,

City Snapshot: Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children

"There is a huge data need. Do we know what all kids are doing in the out-of-school hours, what they would like to be doing, or what barriers stand in the way? Do we know what organizations and opportunities are out there and able to engage kids, including the grassroots places below the radar screen that ought to be thought about and included? What do we know about the range of their size, their financial resources, their needs for facilities or administrative support? We know bits and pieces but we don't have any complete or systematic information about any of that."

Most cities have limited research horsepower relevant to out-of-school programming. But incorporating a research presence in a city's program development, implementation and evaluation can add to the information and ideas available at every stage. In the late 1980s, researchers at the Chapin Hall Center for Children developed a framework for reconfiguring services and supports for children and youth, one that emphasized the healthy development of all young people. The Chicago Community Trust adopted this framework for a $30 million grant-making initiative in 1990. Researchers provided technical assistance to the initiative's seven grantee organizations as they implemented the conceptual framework and documented the progress and problems of the initiative.

In the mid-1990s, Chapin Hall was commissioned by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds to evaluate the Making the Most of Out-of-School Time (MOST) initiative in three cities — Boston, Seattle and Chicago. Researchers shed light on some of the most important issues in funding for out-of-school time, including the disparity between costs incurred and revenues generated and funding instability. The MOST evaluation continues to provide guidance to other cities as they implement a systems approach to improving program quality and access.

Currently, Chapin Hall is working with After School Matters, a major new initiative in Chicago. Researchers worked with the program's developers on approaches to supporting youth development and are developing a dual-purpose research agenda to run in parallel with the program. The aim of this applied research is to directly inform the operation of the program on one hand and, at the same time, to address basic issues of interest to the constituencies involved in youth development in the out-of-school hours.

or number of dollars invested, are available. Obtaining information about the quality of programs – the degree to which the programs support young people's development and

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learning – is many times more difficult. Most cities lack both the research horsepower necessary to build credible

information systems, and the systems for ensuring that programs are held accountable based on existing information. At the same time, robust information systems are critical for parents and young people seeking quality programs, for public institutions and foundations making funding decisions, for program providers and planners trying to improve the quality of their work, and for advocates trying to build public will for increased and re-directed investments.

The beginnings of an out-of-school time information system are in place in Boston. The 2001 Guide to Boston's Before and After-school Programs, compiled and published by PUCC, profiles over 240 programs available to school-age children in Boston. Also, the Barr Foundation commissioned the collection of qualitative information directly from youth which was assembled in the publication "After-school Programs in Boston: What Young People Think and Want" (Innovation by Design and Center for Teen Empowerment, 2002). NIOST and its partners in the Boston Training Collaborative for Child and Youth Development are conducting a comprehensive review of existing trainings and training providers. These and additional efforts to capture the detailed picture of out-of-school time opportunities for youth and school-age and youth workers in Boston must continue to be supported. Wherever possible, investments should be made that result in ongoing and cumulative information-gathering and analysis; too often,

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research efforts result in one-time snapshots without an accompanying increase in systems capacity.

Leadership

Municipal and community leaders – whether they gained their position through election, appointment, or more organic community processes – have been critical in moving out-of-school agendas in cities around the country. Roles range from vocal supporter, to consistent funder, to initiator of new departments and initiatives, to coalition- and consensus-builder. In addition to top-level elected and civic leaders, city agencies and their directors, community organization and intermediary leaders, members of the business community and neighborhood organizers can all help focus public attention and community resources on out-of-school issues. Neighborhood-level coordinating and leadership bodies, whether informal or formal, are just as critical as mayoral support in moving toward high-quality supports for young people. Wherever the leadership comes from, the capacity to move resources, broker connections, bring people around a common table, and enact strategy is critical.

Many providers and program leaders expressed a strong interest in seeing Boston create a unified strategy and plan for out-of-school time that includes the city, the public schools, the Office of Child Care Services and the Department of Social Services among others. Leadership on after-school programs is currently spread across many organizations and

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sectors and characterized as fragmented with frequent duplication of efforts. Major leadership on after-school programs comes from organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club of Boston, B.E.L.L. Foundation, Citizen Schools, the Black Ministerial Alliance, Phillips Brooks House Association, and many other community-based organizations and agencies.

On July 1, 2002 Mayor Thomas Menino's office created a new city department, "The Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF)." The BCYF represents the consolidation of Boston Community Centers, the Mayor's Office of Community Partnerships, the Boston 2:00-to-6:00 After-School Initiative, and the Recreation Department of the city's Parks and Recreation Department. Its mission is to enhance and improve the level of human services to Boston residents. The consolidation represents the biggest reorganization of the Mayor's administration since 1994 and is intended to allow the city to shape a new policy agenda around the needs of children, youth, and families. While the reorganization will take several months to settle there is great potential in the connections forged. One department manager projected three possible benefits for after-school programming: (1) improved leveraging of resources and blending of budgets, (2) greater use of public buildings, and (3) greater use of other city resources such as playing fields, etc.

Within the Boston Public Schools, there is an After School Programs Coordinator position under the Office of Curriculum & Instructional Practices. This position is a Boston Public Schools employee funded through a city grant. The major responsibility of

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this position is to work with the thirty 21st Century Community Learning Centers, although the position is also available for support and technical assistance to all 130 schools.

The optimum leadership model to support learning in out-of-school time would bring all of these sectors of leadership together (including youth voices) to collaboratively implement a comprehensive plan to ensure quality programs citywide. In October 2000 the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched "Beyond the Bell" a broad citywide/school district wide strategy to bring high quality enrichment and recreational programs to all children within the school district within five years. The plan was the result of ten months of work between the LAUSD and the greater Los Angeles community. One of the key elements of the plan was the creation of an Assistant Superintendent-level position to oversee and direct the implementation of the initiative. Beyond the Bell is currently putting in place a set of performance standards by which all "stakeholders" including community-based and district programs will be evaluated. In Boston, like Los Angeles, the need for coordinated leadership and a coordinated effort aimed at building a stable and clear vision for the future of out-of-school time is paramount.

Vision

Increasing support for out-of-school development and learning opportunities will require shifts in leadership, demand and accountability. But the linchpin, in our opinion, is the vision – especially when it comes to linking development and academic achievement.

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Getting a foothold on expanding opportunities in the out-of-school hours will require crafting a fundamentally new vision of what learning is, when and where it happens, how and by whom it is intentionally supported and monitored. As noted, there is broad public agreement that *something* should be happening in the out-of-school hours. The challenge is that opinions of what should be happening are often fuzzy and competing.

Consensus must be reached in Boston around the role of after-school programs in supporting academic achievement. It is clear, based on an expanded understanding of learning through the research of Gardner, Bronfenbrenner, and others, that the type of learning promoted in quality after-school programs makes positive contributions to human development which in turn can support intellectual development. A vision for Boston must recognize the important role that after-school programs play in social education and youth development, and not place responsibility for academic instruction in their arena.

There is broad agreement about what young people need to be fully prepared workers, citizens, parents, and partners. There is even broad agreement about what it takes to ensure that young people are fully prepared and engaged. And there is even growing consensus about what these inputs look like when they are offered in settings – schools, families, youth organizations, recreation centers, work settings – that support development. There must also be clear consensus on how these basic supports should be packaged and offered, who is responsible for providing them, or when and where they are best offered or how frequently they should be provided or even required. Building that

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consensus – building a commitment to out-of-school learning and development as unwavering as our current public commitment to public education – is likely the most important challenge for Boston moving forward.

V. Recommendations

In order to substantially impact the capacity of after-school programs in Boston to promote positive youth development, comprehensive change is necessary. Long-term viability will not be found in a "quick fix" approach. The following recommendations therefore will require a long-term commitment. NIOST's research and investigation suggests that these steps will ultimately improve the services and outcomes for young people in Boston. Based on the research and observations reported in this paper, NIOST makes the following recommendations to promote positive youth development as a support to academic achievement:

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1. **Support the development of a unified and central leadership entity for out-of-school time in Boston including the development of citywide standards.**

Many organizations in Boston have stepped up to leadership roles around the issue of out-of-school time. What Boston is lacking is the one central voice and coordinating body that would oversee the necessary infrastructure and resources to deliver and sustain high quality out-of-school time experiences citywide. Such a leadership entity would:

- Define and promote a public image and message on the youth development approach;
- Create and engage in activities that build the field of youth development;
- Promote broad-based support and facilitate connections to schools and community resources;
- Coordinate data collection and accountability measures;
- Develop and increase access to resources;
- Create and manage sustainability strategies;
- Network and convene stakeholders;
- Develop programs and learning communities through technical assistance and consultation.

Leadership may be cultivated from already existing partners and collaborations in Boston. The recent re-organizing of city departments into the BCYF may be the needed catalyst and opportunity for creating central leadership. Cities such as San Diego,

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Seattle, and Columbus offer useful models of central leadership. At this point in time it is premature to determine the organization which should take on the central leadership role. Given the current commitment that the BCYF (Boston 2:00-to-6:00) has already made, the potential of the BCYF should be explored and used as a place to incubate the collaborative central leadership that needs to eventually emerge.

The development of citywide standards is critical for the promotion of positive youth development as a support for academic achievement. In order to support the positive youth development approach as a daily strategy in the maximum number of programs, Boston must: (1) identify and agree upon the qualities and skills that are important for children and youth to build; (2) define the youth development approach; and (3) agree upon the qualities and characteristics of effective learning environments.

Once again, the timing of the efforts could not be more appropriate. Taken together the development of the MSAC core competencies; the work towards a state wide policy on youth; the NSACA Standards; the Boston 4 Quality work; historical work through such organizations as the BGCB, YMCA, and Campfire Girls; and various initiatives through BEST and PUCC have laid a substantial foundation on which to build comprehensive citywide standards for after-school and youth development programs and staff in Boston.

Long Term: Support the development of a central leadership entity, existing collaboration or municipal partnership.

Short Term: Development of citywide standards.

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2. **Support a comprehensive and collaborative effort to build a full-scale professional development system for school-age providers and youth workers throughout the city of Boston, thereby enhancing the quality of youth development services and activities offered to children and youth.**

Key components of a Professional Development System:

- A core knowledge base of the information and skills necessary for staff to work effectively with children and youth;
- A career ladder or matrix that links roles, qualifications and compensation;
- A system of training that meets the needs of staff at all levels of work;
- A training approval system whereby the field sets standards on the content, conduct and quality of training; and
- A registry of practitioners that documents all relevant training and education completed by members of the field.

A designated leadership agent would support activities including: (1) coordinating the existing training and education opportunities available in Boston into a coherent system, and (2) enabling school-age providers and youth workers to access the training and develop the skills they need to effectively serve children and youth. The agent will need to forge networks and connections between providers and youth workers in neighborhoods throughout the city, enabling practitioners to mentor, support and learn

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from each other. The agent will need to build the administrative and programmatic capacity and skills of community-based organizations providing out-of- school services. At the same time, the agent will work on a policy level to expand the resources available to out-of-school time programs, with the goal of bringing staff compensation and benefits to the level necessary to support skill building and stability in the workforce.

Many of these activities can begin to be supported in the short term. Throughout the interviews and focus groups providers expressed their need for professional forums and opportunities to share practices with other after-school program and youth workers. The designated agent could support professional networking groups and youth worker alliances in addition to general conferences, leadership development institutes, and technical assistant/quality advisor trainings. It is essential that these efforts reach into the smaller neighborhood programs, which will greatly benefit from connections to larger programs and community resources.

Also, one of the components of building a staff development infrastructure is securing strong and sustainable public support for the professionalization of the field. The designated agent should also immediately begin efforts to educate our policy makers and the public about the importance of after-school program and youth development issues. The agent may consider the hiring of a public relations or advocacy professional to perform such tasks as:

- Collecting and analyzing data to create issue papers and other education tools;

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- Organizing "town meetings" and hearings to mobilize and educate the public about out-of-school time workforce issues;
- Building advocacy skills among practitioners;
- Finding and cultivating advocates and champions for the issue in the legislature.

Because of the existing Boston Training Pilot initiative managed by NIOST, PUCC, BEST, MSAC, BGCB, YMCA, and Boston 2:00-to-6:00 the timing of the efforts could not be more appropriate. Building a professional development system for after-school program and youth workers is the key to quality improvement and the expanded use of the positive youth development approach to support academic achievement.

Long Term: Building a Professional Development System.

Short Term: Support professional forums/conferences (particularly with an emphasis on training in the Positive Youth Development Approach).

Short Term: Public Policy Advocacy Professional/Intermediary.

3. Support the expansion and mobilization of full-service or community schools in Boston.

Full-service or community schools as noted by the Coalition for Community Schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities – before, during, and after school, seven days a week. Full-service or community schools operate in school buildings; involve partnerships with

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community-based organizations; and offer a range of activities to the children, youth, and families who participate. These types of links between education and other support services can contribute to the social capital needed to improve children's learning (Crowson & Boyd, 1999).

In its recent publication, "School-Community Partnerships In Support of Student Learning" researchers at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) (Blank et al., 2001) note how the explicit objective of the 21st CCLC was to create community learning centers – stimulating, safe and cost effective after-school, weekend or summer settings for children, youth, and their families. "The expectation is that partnership activities grounded in creative, respectful, and collaborative relationships and new methods of decision-making can transform after-school programs into community schools" (Blank et al., 2001). Making the transition from after-school to full-service or community schools is a long-term project, but one that would well serve the purpose of supporting student learning in out-of-school time.

In a quality community school model the after-school program becomes part of the overall school philosophy and plan. There is a purposeful strategy to the organization of services offered through the school. The integration of the school, after-school, community, faith-based, and local foundation services can offer the most hopeful support to helping children and youth overcome the critical barriers to learning mentioned in Section I. Positive youth development becomes the engagement strategy for the whole school community, not just the after-school program.

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In the community school model, the after-school program is accountable for what it has historically done well which is to provide opportunities for social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual development. Accountability for student academic achievement remains the responsibility of the school but is not constrained by the typical 7:30 A.M – 3:00 P.M. time frame. For example, if math tutoring is to be offered in the early evening, it is facilitated by a school math teacher. If a group of students is working on a drama presentation mid-morning that will be performed at neighboring schools, a youth development specialist will facilitate. The full-service or community school model allows for the fullest and most efficient utilization of staff and program resources, and notably shifts the role of the after-school worker from part-time program facilitator to full-time youth development specialist employed by the school.

Long Term: Expansion and mobilization of full-service/community school model.

Short Term: Promote activities to build school/community partnerships. Promote activities that assist school/community partnerships to create a shared vision, integrate resources, demonstrate positive youth development strategies, create multilingual learning supports, and address multiple learning styles.

3. **Invest in the system building/infrastructure elements that will allow for sustained high quality youth development opportunities in out-of-school time in Boston when private dollars have diminished.**

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After-school and youth development program providers will consistently develop high quality programming when they enjoy access to income that is not reliant on one-time or short-term grants, pilot initiatives, or fluctuating revenues (PUCC, 2001). Building on PUCC's (2001) report on financing out-of-school time in Boston, the following activities are recommended for consideration:

Long-Term and Short-Term activities:

- Fund a local youth development intermediary (central leadership entity) to leverage, maximize, and pool public and private dollars for school-age programming;
- Fund activities which will create the public policy and public will to generate funds for after-school and youth development through a local, dedicated public revenue stream;
- Fund activities which help connect programs to larger institutions which can lead to substantial in-kind gifts, including rent-free space, utilities, volunteers, food assistance, equipment, pro-bono legal and accounting services, materials, etc.;
- Fund research activities that specifically document the significant ways that positive youth development activities as demonstrated in Boston after-school and youth programs support academic achievement.
- Through an RFP process, fund the exploration and implementation of positive youth development activities that engage youth in creative ways, increase length and

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continuity of services (i.e. age 5-18 years instead of 14 years), and broaden services for multilingual youth.

VI. Conclusion

Throughout the interviews and focus groups conducted by NIOST, practitioners, providers, and program leaders recounted the numerous challenges faced by children and youth in Boston including lack of emotional and physical safety, community disengagement, poverty, negative role models, diminished hopes, oppressive drug culture, etc. Experiences in after-school programs consistently surface as supports to

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avoid or alleviate many of these difficult challenges. There are clearly many extraordinary activities and programs regularly offered during after-school time in Boston. Interview and focus group respondents repeatedly cited examples of positive youth development strategies in action, character and leadership development activities, and events that celebrate cultural differences and languages, etc. However, it is also evident that there is great need in Boston.

For many of the interview and focus group respondents their work is primarily focused on one small program in a large city of diverse programs and organizations. Yet, the overwhelming majority of respondents could succinctly and easily articulate the "big picture" needs. It is important to note that many committed and passionate individuals are in place in this field in Boston. This is not necessarily a given in any city and should be considered a "leaping off point" for the interventions and improvements to come. The broad systemic changes as noted in our recommendations section respond to the greatest needs as expressed by the interview and focus group respondents, and are the foundation to increasing and improving the delivery of positive youth development activity through Boston after-school programs.

Positive youth development as a strategy is an effective way to support the academic achievement and well being of children and youth. However, the people and organizations doing this work must be supported by the neighborhoods, institutions, and policy makers that surround them. NIOST and FYI encourage the Boston after-school

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community, leaders, and stakeholders to arouse and lead a new momentum in Boston for building and sustaining the city's after-school programs.

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Web Site Resources

National Collaboration for Youth Members as found on National Youth Development Information Center web site at www.nydic.org

Developmental Assets: An Overview as found on the Search Institute web site at www.search-institute.org/assets

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Appendix A

Focus Group Information

Two Focus Groups with Afterschool Program Providers facilitated by NIOST
Arranged by:

Parents United for Child Care
The Medical Foundation

Focus Group Questions:

1. How can after-school programs best support a student/youth's positive development and ability to succeed academically?

2. Give examples of effective positive youth development strategies exhibited by programs in Boston.

3. Explain what Boston providers, funders, and the field as a whole need in order to achieve "best practice" in this area (supporting positive youth development through high quality programs).

4. Explain the implications your conclusions have for the development in Boston of a support system (i.e. training, professional development, resources, etc.).

5. Explain how effective strategies for supporting positive youth development vary based on the age of the children in the after-school program.

6. Explain additional challenges posed by the increasing number of multi-lingual students in Boston and how these demographics impact the types of support students need.

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